

Sunday, March 5, 2023 Lent 2 ***This is Jesus! Part 2: Jesus Meets Our Needs***

Psalm 121 Matthew 14:13-21 Matthew 6:25-34

We continue in our Lenten journey with our focus this year being “This is Jesus”. Jesus asked his closest followers “Who do the people say that I am?” And we are still asking this same question over 2000 years later! As we seek answers we continue to grow in our faith and understanding of Jesus as our Saviour and Lord. He is God’s Son, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, but who is Jesus, to you? What do you believe about Jesus? And how does knowing Jesus help you live today?

Last week we focused on Jesus as Messiah the Christ and how Jesus was the One who came to forgive us of our sins. Today our focus is on Jesus as *epistates*, that is, how Jesus meets all of our needs. But what needs do you have? American psychologist Abraham Maslow outlined a hierarchy of human needs that are common to all of us. Many of us have studied this whether in social studies, psychology or sociology classes. There are 5 levels of human needs and no matter who you are, where you live or what culture you live in we all share these common needs. As we look at these needs in particular, please consider where your greatest needs are right now. The most fundamental needs are physical in nature, what we need to survive- food, water, warmth, shelter.

The next level of needs include feeling safe and secure. This could include whether you feel secure financially or relationally. The next level up include the need for love and belonging- this includes friendship, intimacy- these are your relationships you have. This is important for many people live in cities with many people living close by but there still might be a feeling of being alone. The highest levels of need are self-worth, identity, accomplishments. This is important for when you look in a mirror are you happy with the person you see staring back at you? The next highest level needs are whether you are reaching your full potential. That is, are you the person God created you to be? These are deep personal questions which you might ask as you get older because you are always continuing to ask the question, are you living out the ultimate purpose in life? But what is amazing is that we all have these needs. We do all sorts of things to try and meet these needs- whether good or bad but we must realize that we cannot meet all of our needs on our own.

This is true regarding relationships with people- who meet some of our needs even for a while. But there is only one person who can meet your needs- Jesus. From basic survival to discovering your purpose in life. Jesus can meet your needs but are we willing to discover how?

Our reading from Matthew 17 tells the story of Jesus who upon arriving at the shore, gets out of a boat and sees a great crowd who had followed him. He has compassion for them and immediately begins meeting their low level needs of healing the sick. He continued to do this into the evening and the disciples came to him and said this is a remote place. You should send the crowds home so that they can get something to eat. But Jesus said to them, no don't send them away. You feed them. They disciples state that all they have is 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. The disciples did not know what to do. There was no food and yet Jesus told the disciples to feed them. Jesus then tells the disciples, 'I've got this' I'm the epistates, the provider. Just bring what you have to me. Then Jesus took charge by having the people sit down on the grass. Jesus takes the food, looks up to heaven and blesses it. Then he starts breaking the loaves into pieces. He asks the disciples to distribute it to the people. Everyone ate until they were full and there were 12 baskets of food left. 5000 men plus the women and children-- @10,000 people ate!. There were only 5 loaves and 2 fish and yet this was not limiting to Jesus. He met everyone's needs and there was leftover. With Jesus, there is always enough. And this holds true for each of us- Jesus meets all of our needs and more!

Jesus saw the need of the crowd of people. They were hungry. He asked the disciples to get whatever food there was and said, "Bring them to me." Jesus does the same with us. The disciples' resolution of sending the people home was not acceptable to Jesus. He knew what he could do and Jesus does meet the needs of those who believe.

What needs have you in this moment right now? In order for God to help you with the many needs in your life, you have to make decisions. You need to decide to let God in your life and supply your needs. Jesus says bring them to me. Even in the Psalms (55:22) we are to bring our needs our concerns our burdens to him—because God will take care of you. For many people asking Jesus with our needs is our last hope; but what if we made bringing our needs first? Wouldn't it be easier on us as we work with Jesus and discern results and responsibilities?

After we bring our needs to Jesus we need to be thankful. Can you imagine what Jesus said to God as he prayed in front of 10,000 people holding up the fish and bread? God I'm here and I need you to help me. I know you will and I thank you. Jesus gave thanks for what he had in his hands. And asked God to bless the food. But how might we offer our thanks when what we really want to say is why me as things fall apart and there is discouragement and anxiety all around. Paul tells us to offer thanks to God in all circumstances. This means that we are to be thankful when things are going well and terribly, NO matter what the circumstances even if life is not perfect, you can find something for which to give thanks to God. For when you are thankful

for what you have, God steps in. When you are thankful for what you have God gives peace. God gives you strength and the help you need.

Another decision we must make when it comes to Christ meeting our needs- is to be persistent; to keep asking. Keep on asking; seeking and knocking—asking and you will receive; seeking and you will find; knocking and the door will be opened to you. Trust that God will give you what you need and that His grace will be enough.

What do you do when your needs are met? Just think about it for a moment- when something good happens do you give the credit to God? Do you celebrate Jesus? DO you come back to Jesus and offer thanks? Can you remember having your need met and you didn't thank him? Jesus healed many people in his ministry. Ten men were outcast from family and community and they begged on the street to survive. They had leprosy a dreaded skin disease without a cure at that time. Jesus heard their pleas to be healed. He told them to go and show themselves to the priest and as they left they were healed. Only 10% of the group acknowledged that his need was met—he was healed and he thanked Jesus. One can imagine how upset Jesus was—only one of 10 people said thank you. He just took it in stride but would we do this and just let it be? Or would we seek the other 9 nine? Maybe when our needs are next met we will remember to thank Jesus and offer praise in thanksgiving.

Jesus meets our needs but we must also choose to have this happen. We must live for him and work with him from where we are and with what we have. Jesus did not need the bread and fish that day- he could make something out of nothing. But he asked for what they had. Jesus asks us to bring what we have including our lives no matter what state we are in- we will be blessed but we must freely offer our lives.

As we read in Matthew 6- we need not worry about anything, our needs will be met if we commit our lives to Jesus. God will take care of us but we must do our part too. God loves us for who we are- his children in faith. But we must strive for God's kingdom and righteousness and everything will be given to us.

Before Maslow created his hierarchy of human needs- God already knew what your needs were going to be; before you were born and before you were created. He sent Jesus to

be the one the epistates the provider who meets our needs. Jesus fed crowds, healed people and he does the same for you. With our need to be loved, you've been loved all your life- even before you were born. Jesus came and loved you so much that he died and rose again enabling you to be forgiven. God established the church- this church family- so you know you have a family that loves you and so you could have healthy relationships. And Jesus is the one who gives us purpose so your life may be fulfilled. Knowing Jesus means nothing will ever separate you but you are called to do what He asks. And Jesus asks us to remember his teachings, to trust him as we live out our life following His way. To remember what he said at the table "Do this- Eat the bread; drink from the cup and remember. Remember how he meets our needs if we believe and trust him with our lives. Jesus meets our needs. This is why we remember him in the breaking of the bread and in the cup of new life. This is Jesus. Let us give thanks and praise as we pray:

Holy God we praise you and thank you for Jesus your Son who meets our needs from fundamental and physical to the philosophical and spiritual. Help us O God to bring our needs, be thankful for them and to celebrate you as the source of our life. Bless us O God as we rejoice in you. Hear our prayers O God SILENCE. Amen.